

# SOME RECOLLECTIONS

## The Story of My Marriage and Honeymoon

By MRS. TOM THUMB

TO me as to every other woman, my marriage was the most important event of my life, and as I look back upon it, I think I can safely say that no other event ever occasioned so great public interest in me as did that. We were married in Grace Church, New York, on Tuesday, February 10, 1863. The further particulars are taken from the report published in "Frank Leslie's Weekly."

"Before the hour of high noon," says the report, "the entire neighborhood of Grace Church was thronged by expectant and smiling crowds. All vehicles had been turned from the route by the police, whose cooperation had been obtained by the foresight of the presiding genius, P. T. Barnum."

"To the diminutive bridal pair, the ordinary arrangements of the chancel would have been far too Brobdignagian. The chancel rail would have towered above their heads, and the chancel steps would have proved heights beyond their powers to scale. Therefore, a neat platform was erected in front of the chancel, to the right of the pulpit, carpeted like the aisles, six steps leading to it, and spanning the three ordinary steps which suffice for ordinary sized mortals. The platform was prettily bordered with gilded moldings, and the surface of it was at about half the height of the chancel rail."

"The interior of the church was crowded with a gay assemblage of the youth, beauty, wealth, and worth of the metropolis. The cards of invitation had requested full dress, which was, in most instances, complied with, so that the swarming, bustling congregation resembled one vast parterre of brilliant tulips all ablaze in the midday sun. Major General Ambrose L. Burnside was, perhaps, the most notable guest who assisted upon the extraordinary occasion."

### The General as a Bridegroom

GENERAL THUMB looked the respectable gentleman in miniature, wearing a full dress suit of the finest broadcloth, vest of white corded silk, with blue silk under vest, white gloves, and shining boots. Commodore Nutt was similarly attired, with a pink under vest.

"The graceful form of the bride was displayed to peculiar advantage in her robe of white satin, its skirt, fashioned with a flowing train, decorated with a superb point lace flounce, which cost its half hundred a yard. Her massive hair, slightly waved, was rolled à la Eugénie in front, and elaborately puffed behind. The bride's jewels consisted of a complete parure of diamonds comprising a superb necklace, with pendants, bracelets, and brooch of star design, ear rings, solitaires with pear shaped pendants, while two diamond pins fastened the bridal veil."

"The tiny bridesmaid, who had just attained sweet sixteen, wore a white silk dress covered with tulle puffings, interspersed with bright rosebuds, the low necked corsage having a bertha to match. A wreath of small roses rested on her short curls, and unobtrusive diamond ornaments completed her toilet."

"The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Mr. Willey of Bridgeport, Connecticut; the bride was given away, at the request of her parents, by the Rev. Dr. Putnam of Middleboro; and the benediction was pronounced by the Rev. Dr. Taylor, rector of Grace Church. After the wedding, re-entering the carriages in waiting, they were rapidly driven through the animated crowds that nearly blocked Broadway, to the Metropolitan hotel, where they received their 'clear five thousand friends,' from one until three o'clock."

"Among the many bridal gifts presented to the happy pair were a coral and gold set brooch, earrings, and studs, of the finest workmanship, presented by Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt; a pair of silver cups and saucers lined with gold, by Mrs. William Bassett; a silver miniature tea set, by Mrs. James Gordon Bennett; a set of



Miss Lavinia Warren

charms in gold, presented to the bride by August Belmont; a necklace of Tuscan gold, by Mrs. Belmont; coral leaf brooch and earrings with diamond center, by Mrs. Astor; a set of silver goblets and salver, by Mrs. Livingston; a diamond ring, by Commodore Nutt; a black fan, composed entirely of feathers, the handle of gold, by Mrs. Ashwell; coral and diamond set, by Mrs. Clark; dressing case, by H. A. Spalding; a set of coffee spoons, silver, lined with gold, by Mrs. Quackenboss; a set of salt cellars and teaspoons, by Mrs. C. A. Phelps; dressing case, by Mrs. S. H. Hurd; bronze clock and vases, by Mrs. Howland; malachite stand, by Mrs. Thorne; gold and pearl card receiver, by Mrs. Stuart; dinner set of porcelain and gold, numbering one hundred and twenty-seven pieces, by Mrs. E. N. Roosevelt; dining silver plated chafing dishes and covers, fourteen in number, by Mrs. Greeley; dessert service, Sevres porcelain, harlequin pattern, eighty-four pieces, Mr. and Mrs. Lenox; book case, papier mâché, inlaid with gold, silver, and pearl, by Mrs. S. Draper; set of Chinese fire screens, by Mrs. Lincoln.

"At ten o'clock in the evening the New York Excelsior band serenaded the bridal party at the Metropolitan. The street in front of this hotel was so densely crowded with people that stages and other vehicles were brought to a standstill, or obliged to turn off through other streets in order to pursue their way. After the band had played several airs, Mr. and Mrs. Stratton appeared upon the balcony, and were greeted with cheers."

The day after our wedding we set out on our bridal tour, stopping first at Philadelphia and then at Washington, where we were invited to the White House. "The Washington Star" gives the following account of it:

"Last evening, at eight o'clock, the little couple visited, by invitation, at the White House, and were introduced to the President, Mrs. Lincoln, Secretaries Chase, Stanton, Welles, Blair, and Usher, and Senator Wilson, Generals Butler and Clay, Hon. J. J. Crittendon, and many other gentlemen of distinction, nearly all of whom were accompanied by their families. The President, in the course of the evening, remarked to General Thumb that he had thrown him completely in the shade; that he, the General, was now the great center of attraction. Refreshments were served to the guests of the President and Mrs. Lincoln, which the little folks appeared to relish as much as any person present. At half past nine they left the White House and repaired to Willard's, where they received the members of the press and a few select friends."

Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln received us cordially. When Mr. Lincoln stooped his towering form to greet us, there was a peculiarly quizzical expression in his eye, which almost made me laugh outright. Knowing his predilection for story telling, I imagined he was about to utter something of a humorous nature; but he only said, with a genial smile, "Mrs. Stratton, I wish you much happiness in your union." After receiving the congratulations of all present, the President took our hands and led us to the sofa, lifting the General up and placing him at his left hand, while Mrs. Lincoln did the same service for me, placing me at her right. We were thus seated between them.

"Tad," the favorite son, stood

beside his mother and gazed at me for a few moments, then, looking at his father, said half audibly, "Mother, isn't it funny that father is so tall, and Mr. and Mrs. Stratton are so little?" The President, overhearing the remark, replied, "My boy, it is because Dame Nature sometimes delights in doing funny things. You need not seek for any other reason; for here you have the short and the long of it," pointing to the General and himself. This created quite a laugh. A few minutes afterward "Tad" again whispered to his mother, "Mother, if you were a little woman like Mrs. Stratton, you would look just like her."

"Mr. Stanton," said the President, "is General Tom Thumb's name upon our army list?"—"No," said Mr. Stanton; then, turning to the General he inquired, "Where did you receive your title?" "From Queen Victoria," replied the General (this is a fact not generally known). "Why, how was that?" asked Mr. Lincoln. "When I appeared before the Queen at Buckingham Palace," said the General, "there were present besides the Queen, Prince Albert, the Prince of Wales, the Princess Royal" (since Empress of Germany; they were children then), "the Queen Dowager, the Duke of Wellington, and a number of nobility. Mr. Barnum had introduced me as Tom Thumb. The Duke of Wellington remarked to one of the nobility, 'Their Royal Highnesses are head and shoulders taller than Tom Thumb.' Her Majesty heard it, and turning to the old Duke said, 'General Tom Thumb.' The Duke bowed, and with a military salute to me, re-



The Marriage of General and Mrs. Tom Thumb.

peated, 'General Tom Thumb,' and everybody bowed. After that I was always called by the title, and English soldiers always present arms as I pass."

"You have never been called upon to do active duty in the field?" said Mr. Stanton.

"Oh," quickly responded the President, "his duty now will always be required in the matrimonial field. He will serve with the home guard."

The next morning we received from the President a pass allowing us to cross the "Long Bridge," and a permit to visit the Army Camp on Arlington Heights. About one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers were concentrated there. Regiments were arriving and departing almost hourly. My brother Benjamin's regiment, the Fortieth Massachusetts, had fortunately arrived from the front the evening before, so we had a happy meeting with him; he was granted a furlough for a few days that he might accompany us north. As we rode through the vast camp, we were greeted with cheers, throwing up of caps, and shouts from all sides, such as, "General, I saw you last down in Maine!"—"I saw you in Boston!"—"I saw you in Pennsylvania!"—"I saw you in old New York!"—"Three cheers for General Tom Thumb and his little wife!" etc. It seemed a joy to them to see a face which recalled to their minds memories of happy days at home. It was a grand but a sad sight to me. I reflected how many of those brave fellows would perhaps never again see home, wives, or children, but their bodies now so full of life be lying inanimate on the battle field.

After a brief visit home, we returned to New York, making our headquarters at the St. Nicholas Hotel. It was the great hotel of those days, but would seem strangely behind the times to the present day traveler. Dinners and receptions galore



General Thumb, 1868.